

Remarks

Reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the present amendment is respectfully requested. By the present amendment, claim 10 has been amended.

Preliminary Matters

Claim 10 has been amended to correct a typographical error. In particular, line 16 previously recited "locking flange", which refers to the "locking tongue" in line 9. As amended, the phrase "locking tongue" is recited universally. Since the amendment is not substantive in nature and does not add any subject matter to the claim, it is believed to be appropriate.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 10-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,371,419 to Ohnuki (hereafter "Ohnuki"). That rejection is respectfully traversed.

Amended claim 10 recites that spring elements are connected with a receiving part for fixing articles in a receiving space. One of the spring elements comprises a locking tongue. The locking tongue comprises an articulating element that protrudes into the receiving space when the locking tongue is in the rest position. The introduction of the first article into the receiving portion displaces the free end of the locking tongue into the deflected position when the articulating element contacts the first article. Further introduction of the first article into the receiving portion causes the locking tongue to return to, and become locked in, the rest position. The

articulating element is arranged between two areas of the receiving space that each receive one of the articles.

Ohnuki does not teach or suggest that further introduction of a first article into a receiving section causes a locking tongue to return to, and become locked in, the rest position. The Examiner asserts that elements 17 and 18 constitute such a locking tongue. The Applicant disagrees. Ohnuki teaches a rod holder H1 having retaining pieces 10 that include vertical portions 17 and arcuate retaining portions 18 for receiving a rod B1. When the rod B1 is inserted into the insertion inlet 2, the retaining portions 18 are pushed outwards until projections 19 on the retaining portions engage inner walls of the holder (Fig. 6).

Concurrently, tongue pieces 9 are flexibly displaced in the left and right directions, indicated by arrows a in Fig. 2, to secure the rod B1 in the holder. Thus, the retaining portions 18 start in a first position (Fig. 2) and are forced into a second, retaining position (Fig. 6) during insertion of the rod B1. The retaining portions 18 do not, however, return to, and become locked in, the first position as the rod B1 is further inserted into the rod holder H1. In fact, the placement of the rod B1, coupled with the projections 19, prohibit any movement whatsoever of the retaining portions 18. Accordingly, Ohnuki does not teach or suggest that further introduction of a first article into a receiving section causes a locking tongue to return to, and become locked in, the rest position.

Ohnuki also does not teach or suggest that an articulating element of a locking tongue is arranged between two areas of the receiving space that each receive one of the articles. Although Fig. 10 illustrates a rod holder H4 for holding

multiple rods, each insertion inlet 2 and holding part 4 receives only one rod held in place by separate retaining portions 18 and tongue pieces 9. Regardless, neither insertion inlet 2 is capable of holding multiple rods. Thus, Ohnuki does not teach a single receiving space that is divided into areas by an articulating element, wherein each area receives an article. For these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that since Ohnuki does not teach or suggest the structure of claim 10, claim 10 is patentable over Ohnuki and therefore allowable.

Claims 11-18 depend from claim 10 and are allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 10 and for the specific limitations recited therein.

Claim 19 recites that the articulating element, when locked in the rest position, prevents the second article from contacting the first article. As noted, Ohnuki does not teach or suggest a single receiving space that receives multiple rods. Regardless, it is clear from Fig. 9 that an intermediate wall portion 8A, and not any portion of the retaining portions 18, prevents one rod B1 from contacting another rod B2 when both rods are secured in the rod holder H4. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claim 19 is patentable over Ohnuki and therefore allowable.

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance and allowance is respectfully requested.

Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,

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